HARAMBEE FLAME

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ONE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

First, I am a man, a mind; second, I am of the male sex; and third, I am a human being, a creation of God--therefore, good!

Speaking in behalf of my loving wife, she is mind, female, and human being, a creation of God--therefore, good! We are not a mixed couple nor color black and white. We are minds, male and female, human beings created by God.

We do not accept the negative mentality of rights and wrongs created by man concerning the myth that one human being is better or worse than another simply by virtue of his or her skin tone. This is racism. We believe every man will be judged by our creator, not for the color of his skin but for what is in his or her heart concerning his or her love of and obedience to God.

-Joseph Fitzgerald

(The above article, written by a Black prisoner who is married to a White woman, is printed here both because it is reflective of at least the surface attitude of a growing number of Black men and because the editor is interested in knowing what the readers-particularly Black women-of FLAME think about the writer's perspective. Please limit responses to a maximum of three hundred words.)

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68502) -David L. Rice, ed.

SISTER TELLS US OF HOME

It is said that you can put a rock in the oven but that that does not make that rock a biscuit.

On the evening of March 30th., Marie Washington gave a presentation to H.A.C.O. members on her sojourn this past summer to the nations of Gambia and Senegal. She showed slides depicting both the geography and the people of this area of the Afrikan continent and also displayed and discussed certain artifacts which she had brought back to the states with her.

While the visual portions of the Sister's presentation were interesting and informative, more important was the spiritual impact of her trip as she expressed it to us. She spoke of the wonder of self-discovery involved in setting foot on the land of one's true heritage. She talked about the special sense of kinship she felt in being with those people whose blood she shared but whose lives we have been separated from by virtue of the theft of us from our home.

Marie related to us an incident in which a truck had broken down and the people suffering this misfortune were standing by their vehicle seeking a ride. After a time, other persons came by and stopped to give the people a ride to their destination. What was meaningful about this incident was not that some persons had given some other persons a ride but the spirit in which the offer of help was given. As Marie related this, the spirit was one indicative of an overall attitude she observed in which mutual aid seemed to be as spontaneously real as stretching upon waking in the morning...We are surely in the oven but need not be biscuits.

ON A DIFFERENT NOTE

To those persons who possess or retain without possession certain qualities/artistic abilities to express in words: we would certainly like to extend, in-depth, a personal request. To our readers and occasional readers, an open invitation to express those pent-up or otherwise hidden potentials for release of your most profound concerns. Be they with respect to love, people, animals, death, life, law, or whatever unmentionables I have failed to mention only because I didn't think to mention them, express yourself!

One's effort to display a thought in a constructive, positive, and promising way is a beginning of a constructive, positive, and promising foundation. Maybe we can all learn to grow from such beginnings.

-Buddy Kellogg

PROTECTING OURSELVES

(This article is continued from the previous issue of the FLAME.)

It is not suggested that we return totally to some romantic notion of supposed(There has been a good deal of pollution of traditional tribal ways of life in Afrika due to European encroachment.) Afrikan ways and values. Not all of them would be appropriate to our situation here in the U.S.. However, many of these ways and values would be of great use to us and raising us from the depths of being a counterfeit people to the heights of being a real people commanding respect and being able to conduct our own affairs with a minimum of dependence upon the power-brokers, and their agents, of American domestic colonialism.

In traditional Afrika the tribe was essentially an organic link-up of many extended families who had a specific set of values and customs in common. Because of adherence to values and customs, the sense of kinship shared, and the overall collectivist attitude, harmony within the tribe was maintained and attacks from outside responded to by mobilization of a united community. Threats to harmony from the inside were likewise addressed.

We Afrikans born in the U.S. generally seem not to have a sense of commonality, at least not in practice. As a result, we are at a loss to deal with threats to our common interests whether they come from the inside or out. In Atlanta our children keep getting ripped off and their lives extinguished while we pray to the local power-structure's police and to the white man's god. In Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne pulls a publicity stunt to show how "concerned" she is about violence. She and her husband have moved into the Cabrini-Green housing project, which is notorious for theft and murder. Many other cities and situations could be added here but these two examples should suffice. The point, very simply, is that we do not have a system of values and ways by which we can be protected from internal or external threats to our welfare.

"The selfish or self-regarding man has no name or reputation in the Gikuyu community. An individualist is looked upon with suspicion and is given a nickname of 'mwebongia,' one who works only for himself and is likely to end up as a wizard. He may lack assistance when he needs it. He cannot expect that everything he does will prosper, for the weight of opinion makes him feel his crime against society. Religious sanction works against him too, for Gikuyu religion is all on the side of solidarity." This passage is excerpted from Facing Mt. Kenya by Jomo Kenyatta. It describes the attitude of the Gikuyu people of Kenya toward individualism.

Unfortunately, the social, cultural, and religious forces prevalent in the U.S. are such that individualism

FROM OTHER SOURCES

-"...Black-on-Black crime paralyzes us; it produces a destructive suspicion we hold against each other; it thwarts our ability to build political organizations that could fight to preserve our cultural institutions, improve our schools and develop our collective economic resources.

The politics of fear must be confronted squarely in the 1980s if we have any hope of undermining the forces of Reaganism, racism and reaction. We must take the offensive against Black people who steal, beat and rape each other and begin to consider such behavior as a political crime against Black humanity. We must investigate methods to protect our children along a careful, systematic program of community security. Do not look to the system to solve the crisis of fear that exists within Black neighborhoods. We must address the problem **ourselves.**"

(excerpt of an article by Dr. Manning Marable in the 4-4-81 edition of THE MILWAUKEE COURIER)

-"...Land is still the most critical problem in Zimbabwe. The less than 2% white minority still owns almost 50% of the farmland. Quite apart from the problems with the constitution, the country depends on the large commercial white-owned farms for its food supply. If they don't replant, there will be a famine. And if the government does not yet have the funds or expertise to take over and run these farms....Already in the countryside squatters are beginning to take over white-owned land they regard as rightfully theirs. So far there have been about 5,000 such seizures, with the government largely unable either to condone or evict them. To condone them would frighten the white farmers. To evict them would be political suicide for any Black government."

(excerpt of an article by Sandy Boyer in the April '81 issue of CHANGES)

PROTECTING OURSELVES (cont.)

among us seems to be the rule rather than the exception. What this means is that, when one of us makes his living at the expense of the interests of the community in which we live, we shrug our shoulders and say, "Well he's just getting over." When the police kill or brutalize one of us or some other agency wrongs us, we throw up our hands and say, "What can I do?" If we happen to be in the religious mainstream, we look for God take care of the matter "by and by."

We need to learn about our original selves and to make use of the best and most appropriate of what we find, not so much because doing so would be interesting and intriguing, but because the ways and values of this land are killing us, literally. We need to institute solidarity among ourselves for some very practical reasons, not the least of which is that we ought to be able to be our own best friend rather than our own **worst** enemy.

-the editor

THE LIGHT OF DAY

Fresh as a morning's breeze
presents what seems a first
breath to the earth.
The joy of Creation enjoins
a chirp of liveliness uneasy
to erase.
Life, a gleam of a certain
concern only a Creator extends.
Unduplicated in its assertive reach
by any imaginative means.
For every difficulty there is
relief!
For every wrong, a right!
And as darkness swallows the stillness
of spared light
Proffer to our youth the truth
and by reflection guide.

-Antone Sanders

VISION

Walls closing in like the blackness
caressing the night

Eyes playing with illusions, seeing
images materialize out of vapors

Sounds magnified a thousandfold

My heart
like wild Bantu war drums
beats

And you,
you who are more black than night,
strain and fulfill my needs

Then drift away like vapor caught
in a soft and gentle breeze

And the walls close in like
the blackness caressing the night
and I smile
content
complete ...

-James A. Brown

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THREAD

Days come and go
they seem
to pass me by
here
in my polyester cocoon
that does its best
to wear away my
blackness
and free me from
its ambiguities
but no
it but darkens the shade
where it rubs
until i
begin there to shine
and every day
i follow a new thread
trying to find
the beginning
to this mystery of why
everything they do
against me
makes me gleam so bright
in this dark hue.

-Robert Thomas

The ground of the prison yard is rocky and hard, hardly fruitful soil from which poems might spring. Yet those men who wrote the poems on this page are all prisoners, safely tucked away at the Nebraska State Pen. Should not this say something to those of you who stand upon more fertile ground? Things are tough all over. But if these men can find poetry in them, you who have no physical wall around you can do as well. Send your poems, short stories, etc. to the FLAME.